DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 921 IR 054 507

AUTHOR Pettit, Doris
TITLE A Study To Determine How Public Libraries Serve Reluctant Readers in Ohio.
PUB DATE Sep 92
NOTE 33p.; Master's Research Paper, Kent State University. Faint type.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Dissertations/Theses - Undetermined (040)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Libraries; *High Interest Low Vocabulary Books; Librarians; Library Material Selection; *Library Services; Library Surveys; Mail Surveys; *Public Libraries; Questionnaires; Readability; Reading Difficulties; Reading Interests; *Reading Materials; Remedial Reading
IDENTIFIERS *Ohio; *Reluctant Readers

ABSTRACT

Librarians often note the lack of guidance for collecting high interest low reading level materials for the reluctant reader. To assist public libraries in Ohio to serve reluctant readers more effectively, a survey was conducted to determine the problems of recommending reading materials for reluctant readers and the problems of buying books for reluctant readers. Data were collected through a questionnaire sent to young adult or children's librarians in 44 counties in Ohio. Libraries with a total income tax distribution of $500,001 to $1,000,000 were chosen for the survey. Responses to the study's 9-item survey were received from 33 librarians. Replies indicated that only limited efforts are being made to serve the reluctant reader. There is no consistent way that materials are shelved or identified by color code for ready access to a librarian advising a reluctant reader. Only eight libraries have prepared their own reluctant reader bibliographies. In general, the collections of responding libraries are ineffective because of lack of preparation and maintenance of bibliographies. Eight figures illustrate study findings. Appended is the Fry Readability Formula. (Contains 29 references.) (SLD)

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ED354921

A STUDY TO DETERMINE HOW PUBLIC LIBRARIES SERVE RELUCTANT READERS IN OHIO

A Master's Research Paper submitted to
the Kent State University School of Library
Science in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Library Science

IR 054 507

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by

Doris Pettit

September 1992

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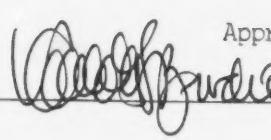
Advisor  Date 12/93

A STUDY TO DETERMINE HOW PUBLIC LIBRARIES SERVE RELUCTANT READERS IN OHIO

by

Doris Pettit

ABSTRACT

Literature written specifically for reluctant readers is an area of research that has not been documented. Librarians often note the lack of guidance for collecting high interest low reading level materials.

The goal of this research was to assist public libraries in Ohio to serve reluctant readers more effectively. The role of literacy is now widely recognized as an important one for international understanding as well as for the welfare of the individual. Never has there been such interest in or concentration on the effort to improve reading ability.

The primary job of the children's librarian is to evaluate and select library materials and to get them into the hands of those who need them. Therefore, it is imperative that the librarian have a working knowledge of the content, age level, reading level, appropriateness, and use of these materials for reluctant readers.

The data in this study was collected through a questionnaire sent to Young Adult or Children's Librarians in 44 counties of Ohio. Libraries with total income total tax distribution of $500,001 to $1,000,000 in Ohio were chosen for the survey.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part dealt with questions about the problems of recommending reading materials for reluctant readers. The second part dealt with problems of buying books for reluctant readers.

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INTRODUCTION

As a staff member of the Troy-Miami County Public Library in Troy, Ohio, the researcher of this study launched an investigation regarding the ways reluctant readers' needs are served by small to mid-sized libraries. The researcher attempted to find out if these libraries have a consistent way of serving reluctant readers.

One of the greatest problem areas in the schools today is the large number of children and young adults who do not read as well as they should or as they can. There are many reasons why this group is so large, but the most important reason is likely a disbelief on the part of the students that they can be successful in reading or in subjects that depend upon reading ability. This lack of confidence has created a group of children who, rather than risk failure, will avoid whenever possible. (Levin 1974, 3)

Reluctant readers are defined by Pilla (1990, 13) as those who usually read two or more levels below their grade level. The National Council of Teachers of English (1972, 5) defines the reluctant reader as one who has the ability to read but doesn't like to read because he hasn't found material that interests him.

Reluctant readers score above the fourth grade reading level, and, therefore, have some reading skills, yet lack the motivation to read. (LiBretto 1985, 13) The child who lacks confidence in his ability to read well will avoid reading situations which he views as threat-producing. This results in his failing to practice the skills which he has already acquired, and through disuse he may actually lose some of the reading skills he once had. His avoidance of

reading situations, therefore, instead of postponing failure until a time when he is better prepared to handle it, actually only delays the threat of failure to a time when reading skills are even more important and he is less capable of handling them. (Levin 1974, 3)

Young Adult and Children's Librarians are called upon to provide and select the books for children who are able to read but do not read on their current grade level. Unless a librarian has had a great deal of experience with graded materials and readers, it is practically impossible for him or her to determine a reader's functional reading level.

Since librarians, who are supposed to serve all sectors of a community are becoming more aware of the growing needs of this user group, they clearly have an obligation to try to meet the unique demands of reluctant readers. Identifying the reluctant reader may be a challenge, since this reader is unlikely to frequent a library. To accomplish the goal and meet this challenge, the librarian must have an understanding of and an ability to work with the reluctant reader.

LITERATURE REVIEW

HISTORICAL PROFILE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

In 1985 Jonathan Kozol shocked readers with the point that 60 million adult Americans are illiterate or functionally illiterate. In the Literary Hoax, Paul Copperman did a historical profile of academic achievement in the U. S. since the early 60's. His findings show the reading-readiness skills of preschool children have improved substantially while the reading skills of late elementary and secondary students have deteriorated sharply. The deterioration starts at about fourth grade and worsens steadily throughout junior and senior high.

When children outgrow the picture book, then they must jump to a novel. They must not only increase their vocabularies but also learn to comprehend a much more complex story. Many individuals have difficulty in making this transition, and enthusiam for reading often begins to flag in the later grades. (Dubrovin 1979, 384)

A glance at the history of American reading education for fourth to eight grade seems to suggest that, with few exceptions these particular years between primary and high school have been thoroughly and consistently ignored (Duffy 1975, 73) In grades seven through twelve there are many pupils whose reading ability, according to standardized tests, ranges from first to sixth grade. A pupil's confusion and sense of failure with respect to reading are increased by the difficulty of the books he is required to read. These students have not learned to read efficiently so they fall behind

their classmates. (Withrow 1975, 13) Studies tell librarians that even avid elementary school readers will be library drop-outs when they enter junior high. (Hawk 1975, 73)

There is a general agreement about the advantages of leisure reading, however, many children do not read very much on their own. (Greaney 1980, 345) found that 22% of the fifth grade students he surveyed chose not to read at all. Those that did spent only 5% of their leisure time reading. Althougn Greaney did not single out the reluctant reader, it can be inferred that the situation is even worse for the reluctant reader. To compound this problem researchers have proved that a child's reading habits are already developed by the sixth grade.

If a student changes his basic reading program at any time in elementary school, and especially in his first four years, there is a read likelihood he will miss the introduction to some reading skills. If he is a weak student and does not receive skill reinforcement at home by reading with his family, these holes in his education could seriously interfere with his mastery of the reading process. (Copperman 1978, 124) Hence, a reluctant reader is in the making. As the extent of the problem of illiteracy becomes known, and as librarians attempt to serve a more diverse portion of the community, it is apparent that a strong, formal commitment to these patrons is needed. (Howard 1982, 120)

Psychologists and learning theorists have generally acknowledged that one of the most important reinforcements in the classroom

setting is the relationship of a child to his peer group. Acceptance by the group is highly important to him. If he is unsuccessful in his performance, the resulting tension and embarrassment may have undesireable effects. A child whose skills are less developed than those of others in his peer group can become virtually paralyzed in attempting to read.

Low achievers in reading may be among the most frustrated and confused children in our schools. Because reading is such a central skill in the learning process, the child's attitude toward himself and toward school are greatly affected by his feelings of success and failure in his area.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RELUCTANT READER

Comments that reluctant readers often make to librarians are:

"I don't like to read"
"I want a thin book"
"I've never finished a book yet"
"Books are dumb"
"My teacher said I had to get a book"

Most reluctant readers have short attention spans and probable a history of failure and low self-esteem. These students are afraid to fail and consequently will not try. Older students just beginning to read have been hurt by constant failure, by testing and rejection, by the every effort that reading demands. (Bates 1977, 19)

Research indicates that students learn to read by reading and that high-interest materials play a key role in motivating the hesitant reader to take part in the process. (Handy 1980, 443) Typically, reluctant readers come from homes where there are few

books or magazines, and where they have not been read to as pre-schoolers. They usually have a limited view of the world around them: one that is gained from sources like television.

HISTORY OF PUBLISHING FOR THE RELUCTANT READER

Some high interest easy reading materials have been available for a number of years. Unfortunately, most of the original materials were quite poor. The older stories tended to be outdated and suited more for primary grade children than for the secondary school students for whom they were intended. In addition, packaging tended to be unappealing. Most of the earlier books were oversized and hardcovered; the print was large and unattractive; the illustrations were juvenile. (Graves 1979, 2)

The first series of books for poor readers appears to have been the Childhood of Famous Americans series published by Bobbs-Merrill in 1937. The series was written at the fourth grade level. (Mason 1981, 605) The series was created because of a growing awareness by educators that some children were not reading at grade level.

When publishers and writers began to adopt readability formulas for the evaluation and grading of their products children's literature critics objected. Publishers were accused of flooding the market with books written to order to meet a prescribed grade level.

From the outset of the recognized need for high/low books, it was felt that these books should be distinguishable in aspects which would prove beneficial to readers. This meant the use of simple sentences of ten to fifteen words and uncomplicated verb tenses. Fiction usually contains lots of action and few descriptive passages.

The length of books are limited so that the size of a volume is not overwhelming. (Williams 1987, 31)

Ideally, a writer should have a rather detailed picture of his audience. If he is trying to reach a large, unselected, and less literate audience successfully, readability principles are of major concern. An extremely important consideration is the beginning of a book. Authors have only a few pages, at most, to grab the attention of a reluctant reader. A first sentence that "hooks" the reader is best. (Lynn 1987, 166) The problem of motivation is of greatest importance when the writer has a specific purpose in writing. (Klare 1963, 12) LiBretto quotes author Daniel Cohen, "I sometimes fear that the high/low book will get tagged as the "dummy's book" , and thus be avoided. Kids are pretty fast about attaching labels to things." There is no reason that simple structure must demand a simple-minded message or that direct language calls for dull writing. The themes of such books can be vivid, as crucial, and as moving as the writer's imagination allows. (Dubrovin 1979, 385)

READABILITY FORMULAS

For many years reading specialists have sought ways of summarizing and objectively reporting the difficulty of written materials. One of the most common approaches has been and continues to be the use of readability formulas. Formula calculations typically rely on word length, word frequency, and sentence length, because researchers have determined that these are the most important quantitative measures to use in predicting readability. The scores

are usually based on sample passages taken from various parts of the full text. The results are these formulas are expressed as grade levels, but the grade-level scores are not intended to be taken as precise indicators or absolutes.

One of the most frequently used formulas is the Fry Formula for estimating readability. (Appendix A and B) When Edward B. Fry introduced his relatively quick readability formula in 1968, which requires only a few simple mathematical calculations, the use of a formula to determine reading difficulty became more attractive. The Fry Formula is recommended because it is easy and fairly quick, even when calculated manually, and it is suitable for lower level materials through college levels.

Another formula used is the Spache Readability Formula. The Spache Formula is lengthly, however, it does provide more precise grade-level designations and is preferable when reading levels that are more exact than one whole grade designation are needed. (LiBretto 1985, 87)

Oral reading allows us to directly observe the child applying his acquired reading skills, and in this manner it can be utilized as a valuable diagnostic tool. (Potter 1973, 92) Some librarians use this simple measure. Have the reader select a page at random in a book that has been graded by a readability formula and begin reading at the top of the page. Each time the reader encounters an unknown word, he or she puts a finger down. If all the fingers on one hand are down before the bottom of the page is read, the material is probably too hard for that reader and an easier selection should be

made. If no fingers are used, the material is too easy. This method can be used by students to help them locate materials at their level and by teachers and librarians for identifying levels of the readers.

Although readability formulas are extremely useful they are not the final and complete answer to problems of estimating readability. Some indication of the difficulty is necessary in order to avoid giving readers materials that will continue to frustrate them and reinforce their sense of failure. The number of successful encounters with reading can be significantly increased if readability levels are known and appropriate materials are made available to the readers.

Perhaps the greatest inadequacy of all readability formulas lies in the fact that they only access quantitative features of the written word. The formulas indicate the average reading ability needed for adequate comprehension of a certain book. They do not prove that all readers of this level of ability will necessarily enjoy the book or be able to read it with profit or consider the book easy reading. Formulas produce only part of the information needed to sucessfully match a reader with appropriate material.

Readability is a complex concept. Marilyn White (1990, 300) defines readability as the sum of all the elements within a given piece of printed material that affects the success which a group of readers have with it. The success is the extent to which they understand it, read it at optimum speed and find it interesting.

HIGH INTEREST LOW READING LEVEL BOOKS DEFINED

High interest low reading level refers to easy reading materials on topics of particular interest to upper elementary and young adults. Despite the publication in recent years of a number of useful high interest low reading level titles, there is still a lack of materials available for reluctant readers.

Providing quality materials for reluctant readers in grades four to six is an area that has been largely ignored to date. (Pilla 1987, 14) Two factors may be critical to the development and continuance of recreational reading behavior - interest in the content, and the difficulty of the text. (Anderson 1985, 326) By providing materials for this young reluctant reader the librarian can stimulate a poor reader and promote the joy of reading.

For young adults with some reading skills, particular attention must be given to the finding and selection of books that will continue to motivate and stimulate their interest in reading. High interest low reading level books should appeal to teenagers by featuring the adolescent experience through plot, character, or theme on a reading level the poor reader can understand. Teenagers are very sensitive to format. Their format choice is the paperback. A teen offered a paperback and a hardcover edition of the same title will almost always choose the paperback. (Lynn 1987, 165) For the poor reader, a paperback does not carry the stigma of the hardbound textbook - a symbol of years of failure. A library that won't stock them will have some patrons who won't read. (Munat 1981, 25)

Whether they are written with "controlled vocabulary" or just "simply written," the books must not exceed the fifth grade level when tested by using a reading formula. Central to all selection criteria is that the book is readable by its intended audience, the reluctant reader.

The key to understanding the reluctant reader is to examine the readers motivation or attitude toward reading. Motivation has been defined as an eagerness to learn, a process that energizes, directs, and sustains behavior; and in the case of reading, a drive that moves one to read. There are several reasons that compel a child to read: curiously, the need for information, and a need for enjoyment.

Children's interests are the most important single influence upon their attitudes toward reading. Interest itself is a dynamic motivating force: it leads to action. Interest alone, however, is not a sound basis for approaching reading instruction. When interest is high, children do read some materials above their own measured reading levels. Books that are high in interest may be reacted to as appropriate in difficulty even though actually two or more grade levels above the pupils reading level. At the same time, books are often rated by children as too hard even though below the pupil's reading levels when interest is low.

Children are interested when they can identify their own values in what they are reading, and can identify it with their personal well-being. Author Joyce Hansen (1987, 644) says her first concern is always creating an interesting story. If the story isn't interesting the reader is lost after the first page. She worries about the fact

that many children rarely see themselves reflected in literature. She asks herself what she is going to do in her books to make a reluctant reader want to read. Children will readily accept books they can identify as similar to those used by others of their age group or by older persons. Conversely, they will usually reject a book characteristic of a much younger age group. Children of all ages react to threats of self-esteem or social prestige present in the kind of books they are offered. (Spache 1:974, 19)

NEWBERY AWARD BOOKS AND THE RELUCTANT READER

Many patrons want their children to read the Newbery Award books because they know they represent quality reading. In 1946 L. R. Miller (1946, 394) showed that children's books awarded the Newbery prize for excellence on the judgment of experienced writers, publishers and editors are often unacceptable because of the excessive difficulty for the ages for whom they were apparently written. In his study, estimates of difficulty were based on comprehensive tests based on actual reading and on readability formulas.

Classroom teachers who have tried adaptations of classic children's literature for reluctant readers have found merit in them. (Spache 1974, 36) Poor readers who would be prevented from sharing the selection with their peers, or who need the success found in reading without reasonable difficulty may be helped by the adapted versions. Reluctant readers who lack motivation, or who would avoid classic editions because of their length or difficulty

are lead to participate. Areas of reading interest may be opened up for the reluctant reader.

REFERENCE MATERIALS AND THE RELUCTANT READER

Marilyn White (1990, 300) conducted a study that tested whether books suggested for reference use with children are written at appropriate reading levels. She found that most of the children's encyclopedia articles in the study were written for children reading at the sixth grade level or higher. With national test results showing that many young adults cannot perform even relatively simple information-seeking tasks, this reading level may be difficult for many. For children with even lower reading levels, finding information that is comprehensive in "reference books" may be very difficult. The subject books suggested for use with children are more similar to adult encyclopedias than children's encyclopedias. This raises questions about how bibliographic instruction in schools and libraries can be effective if we are encouraging the use of materials that many children find difficult to read. There is a need for reference books with more complex informational content for students reading below the normal reading level for their age group.

SUMMER READING CLUB MERITS FOR THE RELUCTANT READER

Several studies over the last decade have implied the positive effects of summer reading. Heyns observed that the single summer activity that is most strongly and consistently related to summer learning is reading. Summer reading, whether measured by the number of books read, or by the time spent reading, or by the regularity of

library usage, systematically increases the vocabulary test scores of children. (Heyns 1978, 161)

The public librarian has an ideal opportunity to work with reluctant readers. The librarian can use summer reading time to reach out to these students. This is an excellent time for the public librarian to work with the school district and become an integral part of the educational team. The public librarian must let teachers and parents know, directly or through the school's reading specialists, that he or she is eager and willing to work with the reluctant reader. Reading for personal pleasure can provide the practice that reluctant readers need without the drudgery of being required to read for school.

CONCLUSION OF LITERATURE REVIEW

If the reluctant reader feels he can do it, and if he is provided with interesting materials that stimulate his curiousity and enthusiasm, he will learn to read. Building on the child's interest and attempting to foster positive attitudes toward reading are worthy and important goals.

There is hope for the reluctant reader. This hope rests in the hands of parents, teachers, and librarians who, working together, can give these children the opportunity to develop a permanent interest in reading. The development of a love of reading is too important to be left to chance.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to determine how small to mid-sized public libraries are serving reluctant readers in Ohio. The researcher attempted to find out if these libraries have a consistent way of serving reluctant readers.

The goal was to find out what works well in a public library setting and to recommend these findings to other libraries who are searching for answers to these questions. This research suggests recommendations for more effective service to this user group. The results may be used by the Ohio Library Association to inform their member libraries of what can be an appropriate role in serving reluctant readers.

Questions asked by this study were:

1. How libraries decide what books to buy for this population.
2. When the librarian does a readers' advisory what questions are asked of the patron or the patron's parents.
3. Are the librarians using a formula when doing the reader's advisory with the patron.
4. Are they in contact with the reading specialists in nearby schools or is someone on staff determining the needs of reluctant readers independently.
5. How are the reluctant reader books identified in the card catalog or database for easy access by the patron.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted with a survey sent to 44 small to mid-size public library systems with tax distribution income ranges of $500,001 to $1,000,000 in Ohio. The survey was a questionnaire asking these libraries how they serve reluctant readers.

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SAMPLE

The sample drawn for this survey came from the list of Ohio Public Library Statistics, categorized by total income, a supplement to 1991 Statistics of Ohio Libraries, published by the Ohio State Library. The names and addresses of the libraries to be sent surveys came from the American Library Association Directory.

QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT

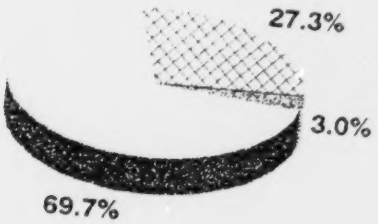
The data was collected in a two part questionnaire consisting of structured and open-ended questions. The length was two pages. The first part consisted of questions about the problems of serving reluctant readers in a readers advisory capacity. The second section focused on questions about acquisition methods used to buy appropriate materials for this population. The questionnaire was mailed to the libraries selected for this research.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher received 33 responses out of 44 questionnaires mailed. Eleven libraries did not respond to a second mailing.

Question 1: DOES THE LIBRARY HAVE MATERIALS FOR RELUCTANT READERS IDENTIFIED IN YOUR DATABASE OR CARD CATALOG BY GRADE LEVEL?

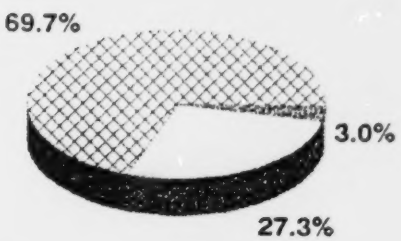
Response: 32 out of 33 answered this question



9 yes 23 no

Question 2: IN YOUR CHILDREN'S REFERENCE SECTION DOES THE LIBRARY HAVE BOOKS THAT LIST HIGH INTEREST-LOW READING LEVEL MATERIALS?

Response: 32 out 33 answered this question



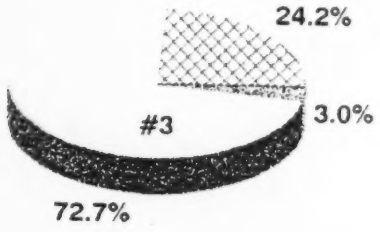
23 yes 9 no

Twenty-three libraries did have reference books that list reluctant reader materials. This leads to the conclusion that libraries are aware of the special needs for reluctant readers. However, the reluctant reader and the parents are not as likely to be aware of the bibliographies by grade levels in reference books. If a child or parent comes to the library and doesn't ask for assistance or have a sense of what level of material to choose there is the likelihood materials too hard or easy will be chosen.

Question 3: DOES THE LIBRARY MAINTAIN A SEPARATE RELUCTANT READER BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR BOOKS WITHIN YOUR OWN COLLECTION FOR THE STAFF TO USE WITH PATRONS?

Response: 32 out of 33 answered this question

8 yes 24 no

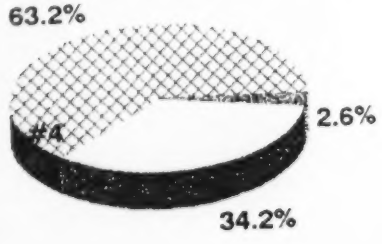


The small portion of eight libraries that have their own reluctant reader bibliography suggests that reference sources could be more effectively used by small to mid-sized libraries to create bibliographies for staff and patron use.

Question 4: ARE YOU EVER ASKED TO DO TEACHER COLLECTIONS FOR RELUCTANT READERS SPECIFICALLY?

Response: 32 out of 33 answered this question

24 yes 13 no



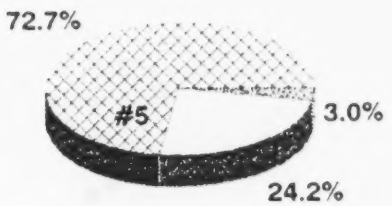
The survey showed a large portion of teachers request reluctant reader materials for their classroom collections. The majority of libraries did not have their reluctant reader materials easily identified by grade level, hence, much time is spent by the librarian chosing appropriate materials. If bibliographies of what the library owned were prepared by subject and reading level the process of pulling teacher collections would be easier to manage.

Question 5: IS THERE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE LOCAL SCHOOLS READING TEACHERS/SPECIALISTS AND YOUR LIBRARY?

Response: All 33 libraries answered this question.

24 yes 8 no

One librarian stated that there was cooperation with some of the schools, but not all of them, so she answered yes and no to the question.



Summary: The librarians were asked to give a brief summary of how they work together to serve reluctant readers. This is their response:

The summaries showed varied levels of cooperation between the schools and libraries. Cooperation levels ran from very limited to teachers participating in some of the summer reading programs to aid in serving the reluctant readers.

A breakdown of summary responses showed fifteen libraries gave teacher collections as the most prevalent means of cooperation between the schools and their libraries. Five libraries mentioned school visits of the Chapter I special reading groups to the public library. Three libraries stated their books were divided by grade levels or the Step into Reading books were pulled out separate from the regular collection. Only one library mentioned having a reluctant reader bibliography available of their own books for staff to use with helping patrons select books.

Question 6: WHEN A PARENT OR CHILD APPROACHES YOU AND ASKS FOR HELP FINDING MATERIALS FOR A READER THAT IS BEHIND HIS CLASSMATES HOW DO YOU DETERMINE WHAT BOOKS TO SUGGEST WHEN YOU'RE NOT SURE WHAT READING LEVEL THE CHILD IS AT?

Summary: Fifteen librarians felt that the child's interests should play the most important part in suggesting titles and offering a variety of books. Ten of the libraries suggested having the child read a portion of a page to determine level of reading. Only two librarians mentioned that if a patron missed more than five words they went to a lower reading level book for the child. Another strategy used was to ask the child a book they had read. Three of the libraries had their collections color coded for reading level and interfiled within the collection. Three libraries had the Step into Reading books in a separate place and directed patrons to these books. Two libraries mentioned tutor programs and suggested help for the patron through their program. Four libraries said they referred patrons to bibliographies of high/low titles. One library had a special area in their education classification in their database of books which were designated high interest low vocabulary and were marked with grade level.

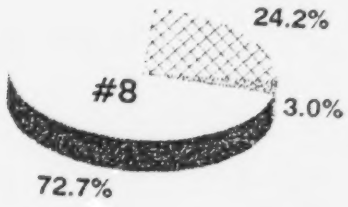
Question 7: HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHAT BOOKS TO BUY FOR THE RELUCTANT READERS YOU SERVE? GIVE WHAT PUBLICATIONS OR SOURCES YOU FIND USEFUL.

Summary: Reviews found in School Library Journal was the top periodical choice with Booklist, Hornbook, Kirkus, Publishers Weekly and Voya used in respective order. Two libraries mentioned the use of Marianne Pilla's The Best: High/Low Books for Reluctant Readers and one library uses Ellen LiBretto's High/Low Handbook. Another source mentioned was the use of ALA published lists of reluctant reader materials. The use of catalogs were mentioned by nine of the libraries as their only means of making selections.

Question 8: DO YOU USE FORMULAS, SUCH AS FRY OR SPACHE, TO DETERMINE GRADE LEVEL OF BOOKS THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BEFORE PURCHASING THEM?

Response: 32 out of 33 answered this question

8 yes 24 no



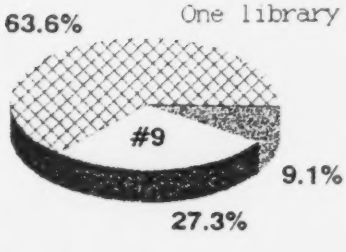
Summary: The Fry or Spache reading level formulas were used by only eight librarians when making acquisition decisions. Formulas are not being used often and the bibliographic records are not being marked with reading levels at the time of acquisition.

Question 9: DOES THE YOUNG ADULT DEPARTMENT COLLECTION HAVE MORE PAPERBACKS THAN HARDBACKS?

Response: 32 out of 33 answered this question

21 yes 9 no

One library stated the amount was even.
One library had no Young Adult Department



Reluctant readers usually chose to read paperbacks before hardbacks because of the stigma of hardbacks associated with text books and years of failure. The reluctant reader can be served by acquiring popular high/low titles in paperback so the child will feel comfortable reading what his peers usually chose to read.

CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that limited and varied efforts are being made by small to mid-sized libraries to serve reluctant readers. There was no consistent way that materials were shelved or identified by color code for ready access to the librarian if it was necessary to do reader's advisory work with a reluctant reader.

Staff members who receive a specific request for a book at a certain level cannot readily tell what level a book is without physically doing a reading level evaluation with a child. This is time consuming, and if done in haste, can lead to inappropriate books being recommended that could further frustrate a reluctant reader.

The small portion of eight libraries that have prepared their own reluctant reader bibliography for their collection suggests that the reluctant reader is often not being served adequately. If a bibliography were maintained this would help with suggestions once the librarian determined the patron's reading level.

The collections of most small to mid-sized libraries in the state of Ohio were found to be ineffective in serving reluctant readers due to lack of preparation to collection bibliographic records and not maintaining readily available bibliographies for reluctant readers in their respective libraries.

The researcher suggests that the Ohio Library Association and the State Library Children's Services Department should speak to this situation. Educating and offering suggestions to small to mid-sized libraries through conferences and literature that offers

advice in more effectively serving the reluctant reader has been shown to be needed throughout the state.

If we are not able to lure the reluctant reader into the world of reading more and more children will lose the ability to think independently. Experiences that take place inside the head while reading can expose a child to different worlds. All children, no matter what level of reading they are capable of, should be served by the profession that stands behind the power of the written word.

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APPENDIX A

FRY READABILITY FORMULA

1. Select three one-hundred word passages from near beginning, middle, and end of the book. Skip all proper nouns.

2. Count the total number of sentences in each hundred word passage (estimating to the nearest tenth of a sentence.)

3. Count the total number of syllables in each hundred word sample. There is a syllable for each vowel sound: for example, cat (1), blackbird (2), continental (4). Don't be fooled by word size. For example: polio (3), and through (1). Endings such as -y, -ed, -el, -le, etc. generally make a syllable. For example, ready (2), bottle (2). It may be most convenient to count every syllable over one in each word and add 100. Average the number of syllables for the three samples.

4. Plot on the graph the average number of sentences per hundred words and the average number of syllables per hundred words. Most plot points fall near the heavy curved line (which indicates average). Perpendicular lines mark off approximate grade levels. Choose more passages per book if great variability is observed and conclude that the book has uneven readability. Few books will fall in the gray area but when they do grade level scores are invalid.

Example

	SYLLABLES	SENTENCES
1st hundred words	124	6.6
2nd hundred words	141	5.5
3rd hundred words	158	6.8
	423	18.9
Average	141	6.3

READABILITY 7th GRADE (See dot plotted on graph.)

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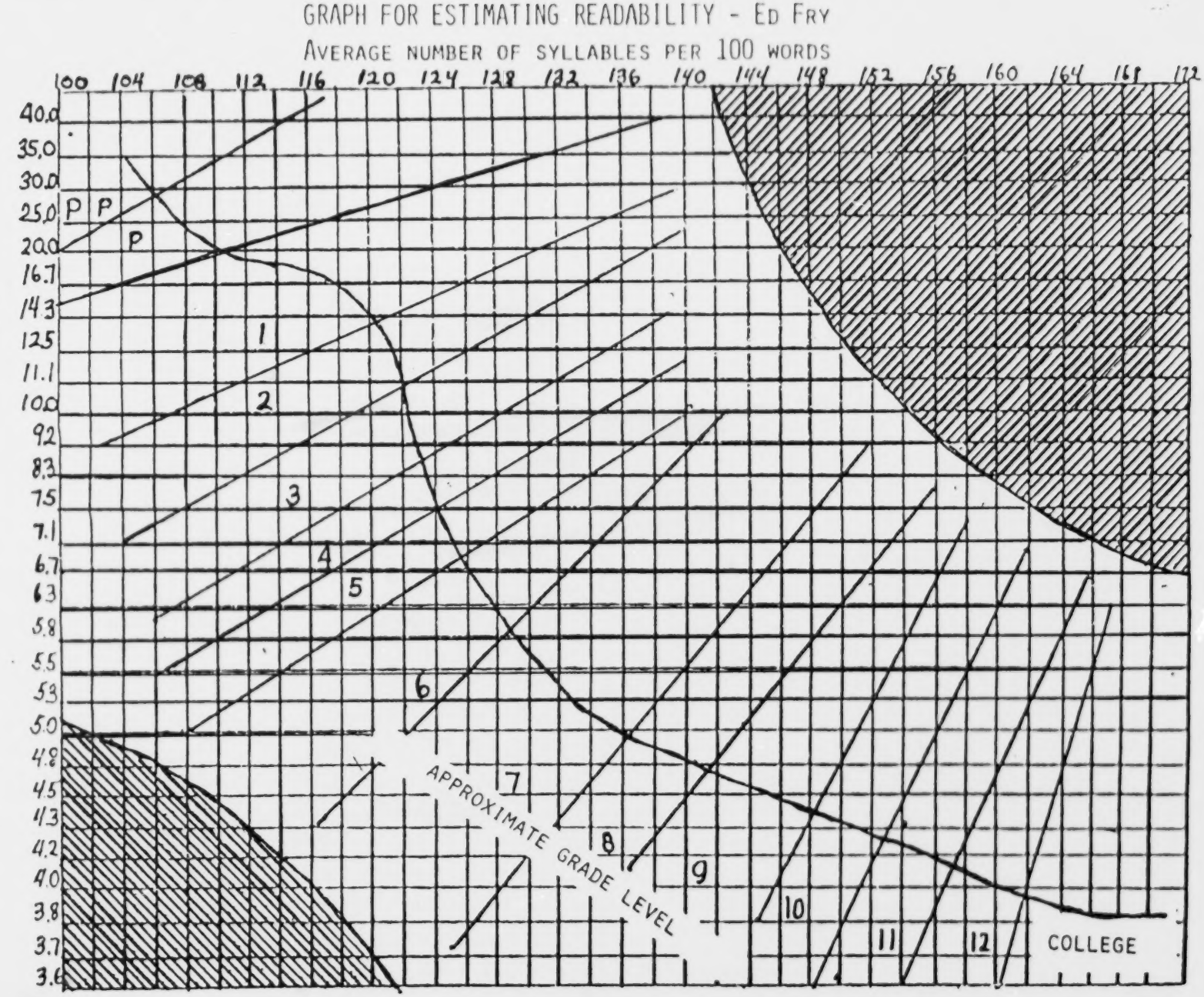
APPENDIX B



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